

**NOTE: These minutes do not constitute a verbatim transcription of the CPC meeting.**

**CITY PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
October 6, 2005**

**APPROVED**

- Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Arthur Simons in the Committee of the Whole Room, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor of the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center, at 4:50 PM.
- Roll Call: Present at the meeting were Commissioners Cason, Glaser, Glenn, Simons, Wendler and Williams. Absent were Commissioners Christensen (excused), Jeffrey, and Smith (excused).
- Quorum: A quorum was not present at the Call to Order.
- Agenda: The Agenda was approved by consensus.
- PUBLIC HRG.-- Request of Cass Community Social Services to rezone area of Woodrow Wilson between Elmhurst and Tuxedo from R5 and R6 to B4: A public hearing was held on the request of Cass Community Social Services to rezone property generally located on the east side of Woodrow Wilson Ave. between Elmhurst Ave. and Tuxedo Ave. from R5 (Medium Density Residential District) and R6 (High Density Residential District) a B4 (General Business District) zoning classification.
- CPC staff member Heidi Alcock reviewed the background information and presented CPC staff's initial analysis.
- The area is approximately 4.0 acres in size and consists of a three-story facility, which serves as Cass Community Social Services administrative offices, transitional shelter for men, and in winter months when area shelters are full, a warming center. The petitioner is requesting the rezoning to permit the future construction of additional residential and commercial buildings on the site and to allow for the possibility of a billboard. The sign was depicted in the petitioner's Spring newsletter, a copy of which was provided in the CPC table packets.
- The existing and recommended land use maps in the Master Plan designate this area as INST (Institutional) and RH (High Density Residential). The generalized rezoning concept shows this area as R5/R6. The proposed revised Master Plan shows the existing land use as Hospital/Clinic and Commercial and the future land use as Low-Medium Density Residential. The Cluster 6 CRS report shows mixed use for the subject area. The Planning and Development Department (P&DD) intends to submit a response next week as to the rezoning proposal's consistency with the Master Plan of Policies.
- Cass Community Social Services held a community Open House Lunch on September 15, 2005 at the existing facility. Four individuals were in attendance. Cass Community Social Services provided information and answered questions.

The CPC office did not receive any correspondence in support of or opposition to the proposal.

CPC staff expressed concern about rezoning this property to B4 given that there is already an abundance of underutilized, commercially zoned property throughout the City and specifically along Woodrow Wilson and in light of the fact that the core mission of Cass Community Social Services is residential and/or institutional, not commercial, in nature. The existing transitional shelter and any future expansion or addition of similar uses at this site would be allowed on a conditional basis in the proposed B4 zoning classification but would be allowed as a matter of right in the existing R6 zoning classification.

The agency has discussed adding a new structure on the site to serve as a secondhand store for both clients of the agency and the general public. This would not be allowed in the existing zoning district but would be allowed on a conditional basis in the proposed B4 zoning classification.

CPC staff also expressed concern regarding the petitioner's intent to erect a billboard on this site as a way to generate revenue for the agency. In January 2005, MDOT issued the agency a billboard permit. MDOT intends to revoke the permit because it was issued in error. Billboards are not allowed in residentially zoned areas. MDOT will not consider re-issuing a permit until after the appropriate zoning is attained.

CPC staff cited reluctance in supporting a rezoning for the erection of a billboard. CPC staff has discussed concerns with the petitioner and together they are pursuing a few different options that would allow the agency to meet its goals.

Mark Carver, Project Director and Andrea Johnson, Director of Finance, Cass Community Social Services, provided background information on the organization and details on the proposal. Cass Community has been providing social services to the City for 75 years. The organization serves 300-400 persons per week. Programs include providing transitional housing for mentally challenged homeless men, rotating shelters, warming centers and meals-on-wheels. The organization purchased the subject property approximately five years ago and has been operating out of it for the past three. The organization is interested in constructing dormitory style transitional housing for women and children, a thrift store, and possibly other uses.

Mr. Carver noted that it was his misunderstanding that the property had to be zoned to B4 in order to establish commercial uses on the site. Cass Community Social Services is interested in growing but also wants to protect the present use of the property.

Discussion ensued on the uses that would be allowed in the current R6 designation and the proposed B4 designation.

Commissioner Williams felt that the rezoning request might be premature since the petitioner was not sure as to what uses would be established and where the uses would be located on the site.

Mr. Carver explained the relationship of the organization to Cass Community Church and Rev. Faith Fowler. He noted that the organization was formed to address church/state issues that arose in the administering of the church's social service programs. The programs are driven by the concepts of the church.

Commissioner Williams expressed concern regarding the proposed billboard. As depicted in the organization's newsletter, the sign would be electronic. Commissioner Williams empathized with the organization's need to identify revenue sources to assist in funding its programs, but questioned whether a billboard was appropriate. He expressed concern regarding the content of the advertisements.

Commissioner Williams suggested that the petitioner might want to pursue a PD (Planned Development District) zoning classification.

Upon questioning, Mr. Carver noted the results of the community Open House Lunch held on September 15, 2005 at the existing facility. The four individuals in attendance expressed no complaints. Three were local business owners and one was a community organization representative curious about the services provided by Cass.

Discussion ensued on the difference between business and advertising signs. Electronic business signs are located on church properties, e.g., 14<sup>th</sup> and Elmhurst.

Commissioner Glenn noted the areas of Woodrow Wilson zoned B4. He inquired as to the zoning patterns in the subject and surrounding areas. Commissioner Glenn felt additional discussion should take place about the proposed rezoning to B4. If rezoned to B4 and the property is sold, other possibly objectionable uses would be allowed on the site as a matter of right.

Ms. Alcock noted that CPC staff is working with the petitioner on other options. These include rezoning the site to PD or just rezoning the area along Elmhurst to B1 or B2.

Commissioner Glenn suggested comparing the different zoning designations to determine which one would best serve the petitioner's needs.

No one was present to speak in favor of or opposition to the proposed rezoning.

The matter was taken under advisement.

Director's  
Report:

Ms. Bruhn presented a portion of the Director's Report.

The latest information from SEMCOG on the Detroit to Ann Arbor Transit Study was included in the CPC table packet. Following the public meetings held in September, selected alternatives are to be further evaluated, with additional public comment planned for the Spring of 2006.

After hearing the concerns of ACCESS relative to the Detroit Intermodal Freight Terminal (DIFT) Project, City Council members approved an amended version of the resolution initially adopted on June 25, 2003. The initial version opposed the “No Action” alternative and urged the negotiation of a Community Benefits Agreement. The amended version clarifies some of the language, in particular, that the Council, in not endorsing the “No Action” alternative, is not endorsing Alternatives 2, 3 or 4. A copy of the resolution approved by City Council on September 28, 2005 was included in the CPC table packet.

Commissioner Williams inquired as to whether City Council has to give its approval before MDOT accepts a final alternative for the DIFT project. Ms. Bruhn responded that City Council approval is not required. However, MDOT is very interested in what City Council has to say.

PRESENTA-  
TION:  
Downtown  
Transit  
Center:

A presentation was given on the final design for the Downtown Transit Center (DTC).

Present for the discussion were Ed Tatem, President, John Roberts, architect, Brie Carlson, architect, and Sharmila Mukherjee, lead planner, Parsons Brinckerhoff-Michigan; Waymon Guillebaux and Tim Miles, Detroit Economic Growth Corporation (DEGC); and Rovella Phillips, Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT).

CPC staff member Marcell Todd provided background information noting significant revisions since the CPC was formally presented with DDOT’s plans for the project in the fall of 1999.

The original vision for the DTC was to provide transit services along with several additional features and amenities in a new and different setting for downtown Detroit. The Transit Center was to provide an enclosed space for riders to begin or end their commute, or to transfer between bus lines. The Center was to provide some convenience service and retail opportunities along with office space. Budgetary constraints and land acquisition hurdles resulted in a downsizing and rethinking of the facility in 2004.

Mr. Tatem provided background information on Parsons Brinckerhoff, an international planning/architectural consulting firm that has had a presence in Detroit for over 80 years. Successful projects undertaken by the firm include the construction of the Detroit-Windsor Tunnel, the New York subway system, and transit projects in Boston, Cleveland, Puerto Rico and China.

Mr. Tatem expounded upon the history of events that led to the relocation of the bus terminal from Cadillac Square, such as the development of Campus Martius Park. The bus terminal is presently provided at Capitol Park on a temporary basis.

Mr. Tatem noted that the new bus terminal will serve as a single integrated transfer point for DDOT buses, the Detroit People Mover, SMART and the Transit Windsor tunnel bus system. The center will facilitate the movement of over 50 bus routes and 470 buses.

Mr. Roberts noted that the DTC is now to be constructed on five parcels bounded by Michigan Avenue, Grand River, Park Place and Cass Avenue. The current land use consists of a public park, commercial surface parking, commercial restaurant/bar/barber shop and a vacant commercial building. All of the buildings will be demolished. State Street will be closed in order to provide a consolidated triangulated land mass for the project.

Mr. Roberts described the conceptual design and pedestrian access to the site.

The design includes the construction of transit center facility buildings, internal bus bays and a passenger concourse. The concourse is designed to allow passengers to access the buses safely by eliminating a crisscross pattern.

Ms. Bruhn inquired as to how pedestrians get from the busses to the People Mover or vice versa. Mr. Roberts noted that the DTC is adjacent to the People Mover Transit station. He pointed out on the site plan the pattern of movement via the surface level.

Commissioner Cason expressed disappointment about the scaling down of the project from the original concept of developing an intermodal transit center. He cited enthusiasm over the design presented in 1999. Commissioner Cason philosophized that many of the projects proposed for Detroit end up that way, e.g., the final design for the High School for Performing Arts.

Mr. Guillebaux of the DEGC provided background information on the downsizing of the project due to obstacles in acquiring the 15 parcels of land and funding constraints. The original design featured a massive building that essentially protected the busses from the elements rather than the passengers.

Commissioner Simons inquired as if the final design will meet the needs of the City 20 years from now. Ms. Mukherjee responded affirmatively. SEMCOG projections for future transit needs were reviewed and analyzed. The development team felt confident that the Center could meet all of those projections. If the City of Detroit should once again grow to a population of 1.2 million, the City will construct multiple transit centers.

Mr. Roberts reviewed the bus circulation plan.

Busses will enter and exit the DTC via Times Square. The center will serve DDOT, SMART and the Tunnel-Windsor bus system. Only the DDOT busses will utilize the internal bays.

Mr. Roberts reviewed the design for the passenger concourse.

The passenger concourse area features a Teflon-coated tensile fabric canopy covering the internal bus bays. The fabric is translucent to let in the natural light. The fabric was chosen after studying various coverings and is similar to the covering at Chene Park.

Ms. Bruhn noted that the original site plan showed trees throughout the expanse of the concourse. Mr. Roberts noted that trees would only be located at each end of the property.

In response to Commission Simons, Mr. Roberts noted that the passenger concourse is not heated.

Mr. Roberts reviewed the site plan for the transit center facility buildings, which will feature seating areas, small retail and wayfinding elements and house the internal operations for DDOT.

Mr. Roberts noted the development team believes that the DTC will serve as a civic icon and possibly become a destination spot.

Ms. Bruhn raised concerns regarding the canopy and its ability to provide shelter for the passengers from the outdoor elements. Where will the rainwater and snow go? What is the impact on the passengers? Mr. Roberts noted that the material would be able to withstand the elements. The material has been tested and proven effective. Problems with tears and collapse encountered with the fabric covering at Chene Park have been corrected. The canopy at the DTC features a dual hub shape, which allows water and ice to collect into seven upper ringed areas and shed into lower ringed control areas positioned in the seven seating areas. Mr. Roberts explained the engineering of the upper and lower rings and the drainage system.

Commissioner Simons expressed concern regarding maintenance of the canopy. Will the canopy get dirty and soiled? Mr. Robert responded negatively.

Commissioner Wendler inquired as to inclusion of a maintenance schedule. Mr. Roberts felt that if the canopy were designed properly, maintenance would be minimal. The canopy will not need cleaning. He noted that the fabric has been used at transit centers throughout the world.

Commissioner Wendler felt that the design of the DTC was interesting but questioned whether its function would occur as planned. She expressed concern that particulates in the area generated by diesel gas and exhausts in a very concentrated area would have a negative impact on the interior and exterior of the canopy. If necessary, a maintenance schedule with appropriate funding should be built into the project.

Ms. Bruhn questioned whether the consultants conducted studies to determine the impact of the outdoor elements. Will people be protected from the elements or will they get wet? Rain and snow will be blowing in from the open sides. Mr. Roberts responded that the passengers would be protected.

Mr. Roberts noted that the canopy covering would be illuminated at night.

Upon questioning, Mr. Roberts noted that there are no shrubs in the 7 bay seating areas.

Commissioner Simons inquired as to plans to include electronic boards announcing information regarding the arrival and departures of the buses. Commissioner Wendler inquired as to whether the boards would also include additional information such as when a bus will be arriving late. Ms. Phillips of DDOT responded affirmatively. Real time information on the bus arrivals and departures will be included in the DTC.

Ms. Mukherjee noted the potential for integration with other regional transportation projects and opportunities for intermodal options. She cited the rapid transit alternative study currently taking place relative to Ann Arbor to Detroit routes. The studying is analyzing various alignments including an I-94/Michigan Avenue bus rail transit option.

As to the design, Commissioner Cason felt that the development team did the best it could given the circumstances.

Mr. Todd noted that there is no requirement for CPC review or approval of the project design. However, DDOT would greatly appreciate CPC support for the project. The Commission could choose to support the project recognizing issues raised at tonight's meeting.

Commissioner Wendler expressed the need for a lot stronger intermodal connection between the bus station and the People Mover, e.g., signage, pathways, etc. The project represents an exceptional opportunity to provide that connection.

Commissioner Glaser inquired as to the time line for construction. Mr. Miles hoped that construction could begin at the first of the year. The facility is expected to be completed within 12-18 months.

Ms. Bruhn noted that the Commission's report to the City Council would include comments and concerns such as reinforcing the connection with the People Mover.

Ms. Bruhn inquired as the reasons why the SMART and Windsor-Detroit Tunnel buses would not be utilizing the internal bays. Ms. Phillips noted that both systems did not want to be in the interior of the facility.

Upon questioning, the consultants noted the location of the tree donated by Yoko Ono. The tree will not be removed and has been incorporated into the project.

**ACTION: Commission Cason concurred with the CPC staff recommendation.  
Commissioner Glaser seconded the motion.  
Motion carried.**

OLD BUS.--  
8 Mile  
Framework  
for  
Unifying  
Elements  
Plan:

Further consideration was given to the request of the 8 Mile Boulevard Association (8MBA) for approval of its "*8 Mile Framework for Unifying Elements Plan*" and support for designation of Eight Mile Rd. as a Heritage Route.

CPC staff member Gregory Moots reviewed the background information and presented CPC staff's recommendation.

The purpose of the Plan is to set the context and criteria for the design of the district and/or community plans developed by the various communities and entities that have jurisdiction on the right-of-way along the corridor so it appears seamless and unified. The goal of the Plan is not to enforce one design for the whole corridor, but rather to supplement existing and future plans with elements that unify the corridor; districts or "places" can have identifiable characteristics. In addition to the members of the 8MBA, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT), and the Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transit (SMART) gave input and will be involved in the implementation of the Plan.

Another advantage of the Plan, once it is adopted by resolution by all of the communities that border the corridor, is that MDOT (who has ultimate control of the right-of-way) will consider the Plan in its designs and reviews of proposed improvements and give a high degree of consideration to individual communities that coordinate with the Plan. Therefore, funding can be more effectively sought for public space and corridor-wide improvements.

The Plan is composed of three main components: the physical elements, the design guidelines, and the facade enhancement program.

The physical elements include streetscape recommendations, aesthetic enhancements, and public art for the "gateways" located where Eight Mile intersects Woodward and Van Dyke. Specifically, district sign markers, screen walls along the sidewalk edge, increased color along the corridor (especially on structures such as bridges, electric towers, etc.), special pavers or colored concrete in special areas, wayfinding signage to denote special public attractions, street trees, and consistent street lights are all advocated.

The Design Guidelines include urban design criteria, development models, signage organization and the incorporation of non-motorized pathways. Specifically, mixed-use buildings, constructing buildings to the property line and orienting them to the street, and placing parking behind buildings are encouraged (all "new urbanist" principles). The use of walls to screen open parking lots and the increase in the scale of buildings is advocated. In the future, these guidelines would likely form the basis for an overlay zoning area encompassing the 8 Mile Road corridor.

The Facade Enhancement Program outlines the requirements for qualifying for the future facade improvement fund or grant assistance program and also provides quality standards for signage, lighting, canopies, architectural details, and color. These improvements would have to follow the design guidelines spelled out in the Plan.

The elements of the Plan appear to be consistent with good urban design principles. Specific City actions may not, of course, exactly match those called for in the Plan. The



goal of unifying the appearance of both the public and private spaces along Eight Mile Road is certainly laudable, and one that can certainly do nothing but benefit all of the communities who border that road. The following of the guidelines in this Plan would enhance both the design of the right-of-way and private property along Eight Mile Road.

CPC staff noted the benefits of designating 8 Mile Rd. as a Michigan Heritage Route. These included promoting a greater awareness of and appreciation for those resources; attracting visitors who bring additional revenues, enhancing economic activity in the region; and enhancing the local, regional and state image on a national level. A total of six (6) Historic Heritage Routes are designated in Michigan.

CPC staff recommended support for the Plan and the Heritage Route designation via approval of two resolutions that were included in the CPC packets. Upon approval, the resolutions would be forwarded to City Council.

**ACTION: Commissioner Glaser moved to accept the CPC staff recommendation. Commissioner Williams seconded the motion. Motion carried.**

Commissioner Glenn raised issues about representation of Detroit and the proportional distribution of funds between the communities and Detroit. Detroit may come out on the “short end of the stick.”

Mr. Moots explained that the Plan just lays out the principles and goals for the design of the district and/or community plans developed by the various communities and entities that have jurisdiction on the right-of-way along the corridor. The Plan deals with common elements. Nothing in the Plan relates to the democratic representation of the board of the 8 Mile Boulevard Association. The public dollars for improvements are based on linear square footage of land.

Ms. Bruhn noted the make-up of the board of the 8 Mile Boulevard Association. Detroit, the county, and the 13 communities that constitute the board each have one vote. The allocating of funds for projects has never been an issue. Ms. Bruhn noted that the Board reviews projects based on the benefits to everyone along the 8 Mile roadway. She noted examples where Detroit has actually received more of the funding because its boundary along 8 Mile is the longest, e.g., the placement of bus shelters and bus stop pads.

Director's  
Report:

Ms. Bruhn continued with the Director's Report.

Brochures for the Detroit Princess, the riverboat that is now docked at Hart Plaza, have been requested for the Commissioners.

In response to the Commission's request for a discussion on the impact of the recent Supreme Court decision (*Kelo v. City of New London*) on rezoning proposals before the CPC, a presentation by the Law Department has been scheduled for the October 20, 2005 CPC meeting. SEMCOG will be having a discussion on eminent domain at the beginning of

its 9:30 AM meeting on Friday, October 7, 2005. A notice for the meeting was included in the CPC table packets.

CPC staff has had no response to its request to the director of the City's Homeland Security for a report to the Commission on disaster planning. A copy of a status report on the Mayor's Homeland Security Action Plan was included in the CPC table packet.

A continued discussion on the criteria for the 2006-07 Community Development Block Grant/Neighborhood Opportunity Fund program is scheduled for the City Council meeting of October 10, 2005 at 10:30 AM. A working group of Council and CPC staff has been meeting this week to develop recommendations for Council. The 2006-07 application is expected to be available on-line on October 31, with the applications to be distributed at the workshops scheduled for early November. Applications will be due on Friday, December 2, 2005.

CPC staff is finalizing dates for the public meetings on the Master Plan. Six evening meetings during the months of November and early December are being proposed for the 10 clusters.

CPC staff is proposing that the Neighborhood Summit be held in March 2006 rather than November 2005 because of the number of Master Plan meetings, City Council Evening Community Meetings, CDBG/NOF Proposal Writing Workshops, and other meetings scheduled by City Council.

The Commissioners agreed to schedule a presentation by the end of the year on community gardens around the City. They expressed interest in scheduling a tour of some of the gardens sometime next year.

The proposed development of the former New Central Yard in Eastern Market by 1565 Erskine LLC is on hold. A copy of a status report prepared by CPC staff was included in the CPC table packets. Planning & Development Department (P&DD) has ruled that the development is a minor deviation from the Wholesale Rehabilitation Project Development Plan, thereby enabling the developer to request a hearing before the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) for approval of the deviation. The matter will come back to the Commission following the BZA hearing. Copies of reports from the P&DD and Joe Kuspa of Metro Producers, MPI Investment, were included in the CPC table packets.

A copy of the Commission's proposed agenda through November 2005 was included in the CPC table packets. Commissioner Glaser requested that discussion on the date and location for the CPC holiday party be held on November 3 rather than November 17.

The Commissioners acknowledged City Council President Maryann Mahaffey's recent announcement of retirement at the end of the year due to health concerns. Commissioners Cason and Wendler recommended that the Commissioners go on record as formally recognizing her service and dedication to the citizens of Detroit. Commissioner Wendler suggested that the CPC present a testimonial resolution in her honor. CPC staff was requested to draft the resolution with input from Commissioners Cason and Wendler.

Commissioner Glenn inquired as to the status of scheduling a meeting with City Council off site as discussed at the last City Council/CPC joint meeting. Ms. Bruhn noted that that item has not been brought back to the City Council table for further discussion. She suggested waiting until the beginning of 2006 to follow up on the scheduling of that meeting since new City Council members will be elected in November.

Commissioner Glenn inquired as to the status of the placement of liens on properties ordered demolished by the City. Ms. Bruhn noted that City Council has repeatedly asked the same question and that she would follow up with a letter to City Council. The issue is appropriate to raise again as City Council will be looking for additional sources of revenue as it begins discussions on the 2006-2007 budget.

Adj.: The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 PM.